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SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE FIFTH CONFERENCE

Report of Kenya

Paper submitted by Kenya**

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1. Nearly 60 per cent of the territory of Kenya is covered by topographical maps at 1:50,000 scale, series Y731. So far over 500 sheets, of a total of about 800, have been published.

2. Similarly, nearly 60 per cent of the country is covered by 1:100,000-scale topographical maps, series Y633, consisting of 117 sheets. The series have, however, been discontinued and are being replaced by 1:50,000 topographical mapping.

3. The whole country is covered with 1:250,000 topographical mapping, series Y503, consisting of 47 sheets. The sheets are continually updated, using 1:50,000 topographical maps.

Status of standardization of geographical names

4. Since 1987, the main cartographical activity in Kenya has been in the extension and revision of 1:50,000 topographical maps. Among these have been 80 map sheets of the southern part of the country. Over approximately 5,000 place-names have been added or revised: this is in addition to the 9,000 place-names which had been processed by 1987. The additions or changes will be used in the production of the third edition of the national official standard names gazetteer; the second edition was produced in 1978.

5. The printing of the fourth edition of the National Atlas of Kenya has been completed; what remains is the binding. It has brief toponymic guidelines concerning the spelling of geograpahical names in Kenya, as stipulated by the Standing Committee on Geographical Names. In addition, a small gazetteer of approximately 2,000 place-names has been included.

6. It is important to note that the Survey of Kenya is currently installing computers at its Ruaraka offices in Nairobi to improve its mapping operations. The use of the computers for the creation of databases for geographical names and the automation of production of national gazetteers will certainly be given priority by the Survey of Kenya.

7. Production of the third edition of the national official standard names gazetteer may be unnecessarily delayed because of the current card index system employed. The system makes additions or deletions rather slow work, particularly where large volumes of place-names are involved. Lack of training in the science of geographical names is also among the constraints that hinder development of a core of experts in the standardization of geographical names.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. Kenya recognizes the importance of standardization of geographical names. It therefore pledges to support the efforts of the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

9. Kenya recognizes that lack of training in standardization of geographical names acts as a major constraint. Most offices hate to work in sections dealing with geographical names; they find it uninteresting possibly because they have not been trained in it.

10. It has been noted that the card index system is cumbersome and slow. With the acquisition of computers by the Survey, Kenya may consider computerizing the process of standardization of geographical names.